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SUBJECT: ANKARA MEDIA REACTION REPORT
WENESDAY, JANUARY 24, 2007

In Today's Papers

Tens of Thousands Attend Hrant Dink Funeral in Istanbul
All papers report about 100,000 people have turned up for the funeral of Turkish Armenian writer and activist Hrant Dink, the editor-in-chief of the bilingual weekly Agos, who was shot to death on Friday in front of the paper's offices in Istanbul. Participants carrying placards reading "We are all Armenians" paused and applauded as they passed by where he was shot. Hrant Dink's widow Rakel delivered an emotional speech in tears, in which she said, "Seventeen or 27, whoever the killer was, I know he once was a baby. Unless we can question how this baby grew into a murderer, we cannot achieve anything, my brothers. We cannot have a great future by supporting hatred." Following the speech, the family released white doves symbolizing peace. Mourners, holding signs "We are all Hrant" and "We are all Armenians," walked eight kilometers to the Armenian Virgin Mary Church where a religious ceremony was conducted by Armenian Patriarch Mesrob II before Dink was buried in the Armenian Balikli Cemetery. "It's mystical that Hrant Dink's funeral brought together Armenian and Turkish officials. He would have been happy to see this turn into dialogue," Patriarch Mesrob II told mourners. He added, "We still hope Turks will accept that the Armenians are Turkish nationals who have been living on this land for thousands of years and are not foreigners or potential enemies." Hurriyet says Armenian diaspora representatives who came to Istanbul for the funeral did not hide that they were impressed that thousands of people from different religions were "united" at the ceremony. The conservative/opinion maker Zaman says the funeral showcased that Turkey respects diversity and is determined to ensure the coexistence of different people. Aksam says Muslims, Christians, and Jews walked shoulder to shoulder yesterday for more than four hours behind the coffin of Dink during such a funeral never seen before in Istanbul.

Deputy Prime Minister Mehmet Ali Sahin and Interior Minister Abdulkadir Aksu represented the Turkish government in the funeral which was also attended by
Kurdish party DTP chairman Ahmet Turk, the French Parliament's

Deputy Speaker Christophe Masse, Armenian Deputy Foreign Minister Arman Kirakossian, US Ambassador Ross Wilson, US Istanbul Consul-General Deborah Jones, German Ambassador Eckart Cuntz, and Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, primate of the Eastern diocese of the Armenian Church of America.

"The nation is here, where are you?" asks Vatan on its front page, referring to President Sezer, Prime Minister Erdogan, Foreign Minister Gul, and opposition CHP leader Deniz Baykal, who did not show up at the funeral. "Tens of thousands marched behind Hrant Dink's coffin, and millions of others watched the funeral on TV, but Turkey's leaders were absent, likely because they were afraid of possible public reaction as well as concerned not to scare away nationalist votes," says the paper.

Prime Minister Erdogan was expected to visit the family of Hrant Dink and Patriarch Mesrob II to extend his condolences Tuesday evening.

Editorial Commentary on Hrant Dink

Yalcin Dogan observed in the mass appeal Hurriyet: "The Dink funeral was one of the biggest funerals I have seen in recent years.

Those marching silently held posters reading 'We all are Armenian, we all are Hrant Dink' and 'Murdered by 301' [referring to article 301 of the Turkish penal code, under which Dink was prosecuted for 'insulting Turkishness']. This was not just an ordinary funeral. The silent majority is no longer remaining silent. I appeal to the Parliament, the President, the PM, the NSC and state administrators, to watch the tapes of the funeral over and over and then decide what to do next. Do whatever you can do as soon as possible, whether that should be amending Article 301, changing text books, revising

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state policy, eliminating all dark organizations. This was not an ordinary funeral. I saw a Turkey that everybody wants to live in, at this funeral."

Ismet Berkan commented in the intellectual Radikal: "There were 100,000 people, including Turks, Kurds, Armenians, Jews, Arabs, Muslims, Christians, without differentiating among their religions, marching behind Hrant Dink yesterday. Unfortunately, we could not manage to demonstrate such unity when Dink was alive. Nevertheless, at least we managed. This demonstration proves that Hrant Dink was not alone in this world, as a nation we were not so quiet, repressed or scared. This shows that we were very powerful in our silence. We can manage to do more. Let us work together to make Turkey a better country."

Hasan Cemal observed in the mainstream Milliyet: "A genuine politician is what we need who can go beyond the stereotypical rhetoric on important issues and can take action bravely. Hrant Dink was a precious figure who tried to go beyond clichés and slogans on the Armenian issue. He was trying to change the common rhetoric on both sides; his goal was to reach beyond the imposed official rhetoric in Turkey as well as to overcome the fanaticism in the Armenian diaspora. He wanted to search for ways to build a Turkish-Armenian relationship based on friendship instead of hostility. It sounds like wishful thinking but, Turkey, from now on, should be able to open a friendship door with Armenia and should be able to handle the Armenian issue without slogans and the usual rhetoric."

Controversy over Article 301 Continues

Hurriyet, Sabah, Radikal, Cumhuriyet, Zaman, Yeni Safak and others report although the ruling AKP government has signaled readiness to review the infamous Article 301, which the EU says restricts free speech, thus far there has been no concrete attempt to that end. Justice Minister Cemil Cicek yesterday advised "discussing it later" when he was asked by the press about prospects for the abolishment of the article. Parliament Speaker Bulent Arinc had said earlier in the week he was positive about changes to it. The main opposition CHP deputy chairman Mustafa Ozyurek said CHP would oppose any attempt coming from the AKP to change or scrap Article 301. Another leading figure in the party, Onur Oymen, said "It's wrong to link the Dink murder to Article 301, a provision penalizing insult. Such provisions are currently enforced in several European countries".

Turkish Parliament Holds Closed-Door Debate on Iraq

All papers report the Turkish Parliament held a closed session Tuesday to discuss security threats originating from northern Iraq and prospects for Kurdish control over Kirkuk amid growing strains with the Baghdad government which accused Turkey of fueling division in its north. According to the law, the records of a parliamentary closed session are sealed and stored in a vault without being made public for ten years. The participants are not allowed to talk or write about the discussions for the same duration. Meanwhile, papers report that responding to the Turkish Parliament's move, the regional Kurdish assembly in northern Iraq reportedly decided to hold an extraordinary session Wednesday to discuss Turkey.

Iraqi Kurds Hold Kirkuk Conference in London

The leftist/nationalist Cumhuriyet reports Kurdish groups held an "Kirkuk and Article 140 of Iraq Constitution" conference in London, attended by the regional Kurdish parliament deputy speaker Kemal Kerkuki, the regional administration's education minister Dilsad Abdurrahman, and the Iraqi Parliament lawmaker Mahmud Osman, known to be supportive of the PKK. The conference, held by the "Support Committee for Kirkuk in London," is seen as an act of "retaliation" against the "Kirkuk: 2007" panel meeting held January 15 in Ankara. The conference, in line with Kurds' policies, called for the enforcement of Article 140 of the Iraqi Constitution regarding Kirkuk, warning Turkey to stay away from northern Iraq.

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TV Highlights

NTV (6 A.M.)

Domestic News

- The lawyer of slain writer Hrant Dink is to reportedly request a bone test to find the real age of the assailant, Ogun Samast. At age 17, Samast will be tried at a minors' court which could reduce any prison term.
- Turkish and Italian prime ministers inaugurated Tuesday the Bolu Mountain tunnel that will reduce the travel time between Istanbul and Ankara to 3.5 hours, resulting in an annual savings of USD 40 million.
- President Sezer and visiting Polish President Lech Kaczynski have signed a joint declaration envisaging cooperation between the two countries.
- Foreign Minister Abdullah Gul will travel to Paris Wednesday evening to attend a donor's conference for Lebanon. On January 26-27, Gul, accompanied by State Minister Ali Babacan, will participate in World Economic Forum meeting in Davos.
- Fifty-six mayors from Turkey's Kurdish party DTP face trial for sending a letter to Danish Prime Minister Rasmussen in a campaign against the closure of the Copenhagen-based Kurdish broadcaster Roj TV.

International News

- On Tuesday, the Hezbollah-led opposition cut roads in Beirut and across Lebanon to enforce a strike aimed at toppling the Lebanese government, paralyzing the country and cornering officials ahead of an international aid conference to be held in Paris.
- US forces in Iraq have detained over the past 45 days some 600 militants loyal to Shiite cleric Muqtada al-Sadr.
- A poll commissioned by the BBC World Service says the US image has deteriorated around the world in the past year because of issues such as Iraq and the captives at Guantanamo Bay. In Turkey, 69 percent believe US influence on world affairs is mainly negative.
- A secret document says former Russian spy Alexander Litvinenko

accused Italian Prime Minister Romano Prodi of being "a friend of the KGB."

<http://www.state.sgov.gov/p/eur/ankara/>

WILSON